

GIVE Act Will Triple the Number of Full-Time National Service Volunteers

March 18, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (LA-03) today joined a bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives in voting for a bill that will significantly improve volunteer relief efforts in times of natural disaster or national emergency. The Generations Invigorating Volunteerism and Education (GIVE) Act, H.R. 1388, will include several provisions that will help increase our nation's preparedness in responding to hurricanes, floods, wildfires, and other disasters that have devastated communities in recent years. The House passed the legislation by a vote of 321 to 105. The Senate is also considering similar legislation.

"Louisianians will always be grateful that when we were most in need, thousands of volunteers from across the nation rushed to our side to help us get back on our feet," said Rep. Melancon.

"Three years later, these volunteers were still coming to Louisiana to help us rebuild when Gustav and Ike swept through. In their wake came another wave of volunteers, people willing to put their own lives on hold and travel to Louisiana to help us recover.

"These storms and other recent disasters have shown that Americans' desire to give back is growing. The GIVE Act will increase opportunities for people to serve their communities, while also strengthening volunteer disaster relief efforts. I am proud to support it and I thank Chairman Miller for his leadership in writing and building bipartisan support for this bill."

American service organizations and volunteers have played a vital role in relief and recovery efforts in the wake of natural disasters. Since August 2005, the federal Corporation for National and Community Service has provided more than \$130 million worth of relief to Gulf Coast states devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and deployed nearly 92,000 full-time national service volunteers who have put in over 3.5 million hours helping communities rebuild. These full-time national service volunteers have supported and boosted the efforts of the 260,000 community volunteers who have been involved in the recovery.

The GIVE Act creates a greater infrastructure and capacity for responding to disasters by growing the number of volunteers serving in national service corps like AmeriCorps from the current 75,000 to 250,000 nationwide.

By increasing the numbers of volunteers, the GIVE Act will give local volunteer organizations such as the St. Bernard Project in southeast Louisiana more hands to help rebuild communities. The St. Bernard Project is a nonprofit volunteer organization that helps families who lost their homes after Hurricane Katrina rebuild. Today, the St. Bernard Project welcomed their 200th family home. Since the storms, over 200 AmeriCorps volunteers have worked with the St. Bernard Project.

In addition to providing emergency relief after disasters, Americans volunteering with the national service corps have served with thousands of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based organizations nationwide - from small community groups to nationally known

organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Red Cross, and Boys and Girls Clubs of America. In Louisiana, more than 25,000 national service volunteers are currently helping to meet local community needs through 215 national service projects across the state. [Click here for more information.](#)

The GIVE Act also makes it possible for existing programs to respond more effectively by expanding the focus of the [National Civilian Community Corps \(NCCC\)](#), a division of AmeriCorps, to include disaster relief and infrastructure improvement.

In addition, the House passed an amendment to the GIVE Act creating a National Service Reserve Corps of volunteers who have completed a term of national service, fulfilled training, and will respond to national disasters and other emergencies. These volunteer "alumni" will be listed in a national database so they can be immediately deployed in case of emergency. They will have an annual service requirement of at least 10 hours and/or annual training. AmeriCorps alone has over 500,000 volunteer alumni that could join the National Service Reserve Corps.

The GIVE Act would increase the education benefit national service volunteers receive to \$5,350 for next year, the same as the maximum Pell Grant scholarship award. The service scholarship would also be linked to match future boosts in the Pell Grant scholarship in order to keep up with rising college costs.

The legislation would also provide new incentives for middle and high school students to volunteer in their communities. It would create a Summer of Service program to engage students in service and allow them to earn a \$500 education award to be used for college costs.

The GIVE Act would create a new national Call to Service campaign to encourage all Americans to get involved in service and would encourage Americans to observe September 11th a National Day of Service and Remembrance.

In addition, the legislation would:

- Strengthen existing service programs and create new innovative programs to help improve student achievement and graduation in low-income schools, expand health care access, provide seniors with help living independently, enhance services for veterans, and help build a green, energy-efficient economy;
- Establish a Veterans' Corps to meet the unique needs of veterans and military families;
- Expand the focus of the National Civilian Community Corps to infrastructure improvement, environmental and energy conservation, and urban and rural development, in addition to disaster relief;

- Create new opportunities for Baby Boomers and seniors to serve and volunteer;
- Recruit scientists and engineers into service to keep America competitive; and
- Build a nationwide community-based infrastructure to leverage investments in service.

For a more detailed fact sheet, [click here](#) .

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